

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

PLAIN TRUTHS FOR THE NEGROES.

The colored people have been holding a convention at Poughkeepsie to take into consideration the political and educational interests of their race in three of the Congressional districts of this State. The President made a very sensible speech, in which he pointed out what the best white friends of the colored people have pointed out frequently since their emancipation, that although their participation in politics is very well as a sign of their equality, and as a means of preserving it, reliance on politics for their social elevation is an immense mistake. He asked very pertinently, "Have they not been hewers of wood and drawers of water long enough? Have they not blacked their master's boots and stood behind his chair until their hearts were sick and sore?" To these questions, we suppose, there can be but one answer, but it is useless, as he also pointed out, for the colored people to expect to escape from their degradation by simply voting. Now that everybody votes, no man is respected for voting, any more than for wearing pantaloons, although inability to vote when others did vote would, undoubtedly, be a mark of inferiority. In order to rise in the social scale, the colored race must show itself capable of the acquirements and achievements through which other races have achieved distinction. It must furnish a fair quota of able and successful men of business, of learned and astute lawyers, of well-trained scholars, of eloquent preachers, of painstaking and clear-headed, and thorough men of science. It must, too, do a reasonable amount for the arts of music and painting, at least—we are disposed in consideration of the multiplicity of white poets to grant it a considerable respite in the matter of poetry. Lastly it must furnish a respectable quota of honorable and polished men of culture, and women of the same sort. It is no doubt pretty hard for a race situated as it has been, and still is, to do all this; but it must be done, in order to attain to anything approaching to social equality. Position in this world is only accorded to desert of some kind, and all the speeches that could be put into fifty years of conventions would not change the rule. Of course, no race is expected to furnish a great number of first class men in any department, but it has to furnish some, and of their performances the race gets the benefit in respect and reputation.

But, then at the bottom of all social improvement is improvement in character. Without a good basis of truthful, manly, self-reliant, upright character, there is no use in the colored people trying to raise themselves socially in the estimation of their white neighbors, and they may depend upon it that they are going to act upon the worst resolution adopted by the convention, they will not hasten the formation of that type of character, or any other type that will be of use either to them or to the community at large. That resolution was, "That this convention will discountenance any person or persons who has or will continue to vote the Democratic ticket, and that we agree to disregard them, and will not give any place of protection or shelter in our houses or places of business, but consider them an enemy to our race forever." The grammar of this is not encouraging, though if this were its only defect it would pass well enough. But the colored people could hardly hit on a better mode of keeping themselves down, and making themselves both contemptible and ridiculous, than by a formal attempt to use their social intercourse as a means of political proscription. Moreover, they could hardly hit on a better mode of cultivating meanness, deceit, and other small vices, which sap character just as effectively as the great ones, and the prevalence of which has already a good deal to do with their degradation. The resolution, too, stands in extraordinary contrast with the advice of the President, both of the avowed objects of the Convention, both of which urge reliance on self-culture, through education and other ways, as the sole means of regeneration. We are no friends of the Democratic party, and we believe the colored people, like the Irish, and indeed the poor and ignorant of all races, have no worse enemy than this same party; but, then, a negro, who is kept from voting for it, by the fear that he would lose his place, or be cut off from social intercourse with his friends, would be a contemptible fellow, and sure to make a bad Republican. The same thing might be said of the negroes who watched him and persecuted him.

Of course the professional politicians on both sides are ready enough to work the colored people up into furies of this kind, but the professional politicians are sorry guides for any people which has a social education to acquire. We see the Poughkeepsie Convention is going to take measures to have "the strength of the colored people ascertained in the three Congressional districts," which is very well as long as they don't flatter themselves that "their strength" lies in their numbers. Their real strength must always be in their education, or, in other words, in their ability to see where, in politics as in other things, their real interests lie, and to avoid falling into the hands of, and being led blindfold by, white demagogues. For which reason we anticipate a great deal more good from the determination of the convention "to build an academy, seminary, or high school," in or near Poughkeepsie, than from its determination to have "the colored vote brought out" in those districts.

The attempts of the colored people to work their way up have not thus far been very fortunate. They have by no means put their best men into the front rank. They have sent one or two men to the Bar here at the North, who have been miserable failures in every way; and though some of their leaders at the South have been good men, their politicians have, on the whole, done them no credit. Their cadets, too, at West Point have certainly not been selected in such a way as to assert the principle of equality with much honor, and one or two mistakes, such as the election of Whittemore, have dishonored a good many of their friends. But they have distinguished students now both at Yale and Harvard, and there are plenty of other signs that, with good sense and hard work, there is nothing to hinder them from winning, if not a place in the very front rank, still a very respectable place.

THE MILITARY SITUATION.

Our recent despatches indicate that the Prussians are still fighting for position in front of the southern line of works about Paris. Dourdan, a village southwest of Versailles, has been occupied by the besiegers,

and the fortifications at Vincennes have been abandoned by the French. No strong effort has been made on the northern side of the city, the intention being merely to present a thin front there, strong to resist, from behind the fortifications that the besiegers throw up as they move, any sally on the part of the French, but not strong enough to venture on an assault. The positions gained thus far are Soeux, from which the Prussians command Forts Montrouge, Vauvres, and Biestre; the fortifications at Vincennes, whence they can bombard La Fosse and Charonville if necessary, and Versailles. Outside of these positions a railroad encircling Paris has been completed, by which, in an hour's time, they can concentrate their whole force upon one point. The woods which the French failed to burn enable the Prussians to mask their movements pretty effectually. One report states that the French had attacked the Prussians in the woods on the south, and a severe battle had ensued, in which the former had been repulsed. Another report denies this, but if it is true no doubt the intention of the French was to complete, if possible, the demarcation of the woods by fire in order to unmask the movements of the enemy. Despatches from Tours state that inside Paris there is a calm determination to hold out to the bitter end. Another despatch, however, says that all discipline is vanishing among the troops inside, and that the mob is rapidly becoming the dominant power.

The Prussian movement southward continues with unabated activity. Detachments have entered Fontainebleau and Blois, and other detachments are marching on Nemours and Orleans. There remains but little doubt that these detached columns are Uhlans, who merely make flying visits, levy contributions, destroy railroads, if possible, spread false reports of the movements of the Prussian infantry, and are gone again. These movements cripple the French severely, and serve as an effectual mask to the actual operations of the invading army. It may prove, however, that the force moving on Orleans is actually a heavy infantry force following in the rear of the advance cavalry at Blois, and having Tours as its present objective point. Tours and Orleans are both to be defended and will probably undergo a siege such as Metz and Strasbourg and Paris are undergoing. With the disappearance of the Army of the Loire, which does not seem to have attempted any resistance whatever to the Prussian advance, the strange anomaly is presented of France at war without an army in the field, every force she has raised for service so far being cooped up in one of several towns now in a state of siege. What a weak enemy she has proven in open combat, and what stubborn foes her mismanaged armies have proven in Strasbourg, Metz, and Toul! The siege of these cities is progressing slowly with no effectual change in the situation. General Ulrich, it is said, is willing to surrender, but has been deterred from it by the demands of the soldiers. A shell is reported to have struck the Strasbourg theatre, and two hundred women and children who had taken refuge there being burned to death. At Metz the defense holds out stubbornly against a close blockade, the furious bombardment having ceased, owing, it is probable, to a partial withdrawal of the besieging force.

We may soon expect a grand assault at Paris. King William cannot afford to sit down patiently to the tedious operation of starving out the garrison until he has tried the spirit and strength of the works and their defenders by flinging the full force of his army against them. It may be that the troops from Toul and Metz indicate some action of this kind, and it may be that it is only delayed by the pending negotiations for peace. Heaven grant that blessed peace come early enough to save this century from the sight of an army of infuriated Prussians swooping through the streets of Paris.

AN AMERICAN "IMPRACTICABLE."

Wendell Phillips is fulminating in a Victor Hugoish style against Bismarck, whom he denounces as "the willing tool of a bigot king," and against Prussia because the German armies were not set immediately on the march after Sedan. Those who remember the extravagancies perpetrated by Phillips with the advice of the President and the avowed objects of the Convention, both of which urge reliance on self-culture, through education and other ways, as the sole means of regeneration. We are no friends of the Democratic party, and we believe the colored people, like the Irish, and indeed the poor and ignorant of all races, have no worse enemy than this same party; but, then, a negro, who is kept from voting for it, by the fear that he would lose his place, or be cut off from social intercourse with his friends, would be a contemptible fellow, and sure to make a bad Republican. The same thing might be said of the negroes who watched him and persecuted him.

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PRUSSIA AND HER TERMS OF PEACE.

Count Bismarck has written a circular to the German ambassadors at the various European Courts, in which he announces in official terms, so plain and positive that they cannot be doubted, the principal condition of peace which Germany will insist upon. She may demand other and greater guarantees; certain it is, however, that she will not be content with the dismantling of Metz and Strasbourg, as M. Jules Favre has suggested; but means to take and to keep both. This condition was resolved on long ago; it was, indeed, duly considered, and determined upon soon after the war began, and was announced unofficially soon after the battle of Gravelotte. On August 28 a correspondent of the Tribune held a long conversation with Count Bismarck upon the subject of the conditions of peace to be demanded. This conversation was reported in full in the Tribune of September 6. After declaring that he opposed the organization of Alsace and Lorraine into a neutral State like Luxembourg or Belgium, and did not desire to hold them as unwilling members or conquered provinces of the German nation, Count Bismarck said: "There remains to us, then, as a third course, to take Metz and Strasbourg and to keep them. This is what we shall do. Strasbourg particularly is absolutely essential for the protection of the Rhine, which is at the mercy of a French army, so long as France possesses Strasbourg there is nothing to be done as to a French invading army. Now, we are very unfair if we were to leave our South German brethren unprotected, after they have fought so bravely and well by our side in this campaign. Then, again, by holding Strasbourg we could have any movement on the Rhine. We should be able not only to march an army by the valley of the Main on Paris, but to take a French army marching on Mayence, Coblenz in flank and rear. So we have besieged Strasbourg vigorously, and when we have got the old German town back again we shall make it a Gibraltar of the Rhine."

The circular of Count Bismarck now published simply reiterates these statements, and gives additional arguments by which he seeks to establish the justice of the demand to be made. The right of the Germans, as the victors in the struggle, to insist upon these terms no one will deny, and no neutral nation is likely to dispute, though it would seem from the nature of the circular that Count Bismarck fears as much. Its avowed purpose is to thwart the efforts making by M. Thiers to influence the neutral powers to intervene, and it cannot but have a powerful effect in restraining them, if any restraint be needed. Count Bismarck also announces that with the domestic affairs of France Germany will have nothing whatever to do. He will treat with any responsible Government authorized and strong enough to carry out the treaty which it makes. But in the matter of the future security of Germany from invasion he evidently does not intend to rely on parchment promises. To the occupation of Metz and Strasbourg by Germany, France will eventually be forced to submit, for upon that depends the security of Germany and, as Bismarck strongly and rightly insists in his circular, the peace of Europe.

THE FALL OF THE EMPEROR.

The first impression made upon untravelled experience by a tropical landscape of pre-eminent beauty, such as the harbor of Rio, is, How picture-like! how unnatural! The conditions of judgment are in like manner reversed when we survey as a whole some strange life or some exceptional and startling chapter of history. A work or character of fiction, or a political sermon, or a political life, that, when it fits into our ordinary experience; but a man's life and career is judged to be especially valuable or instructive if we can only say of it that it has all the elements of romance, that it is full of dramatic interest, and presents the most picturesque surprises, contrasts, or coincidences, or that it conveys a moral, or points what we call some great lesson, or brings out the award of a righteous Nemesis in the way of retaliation or compensation. 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